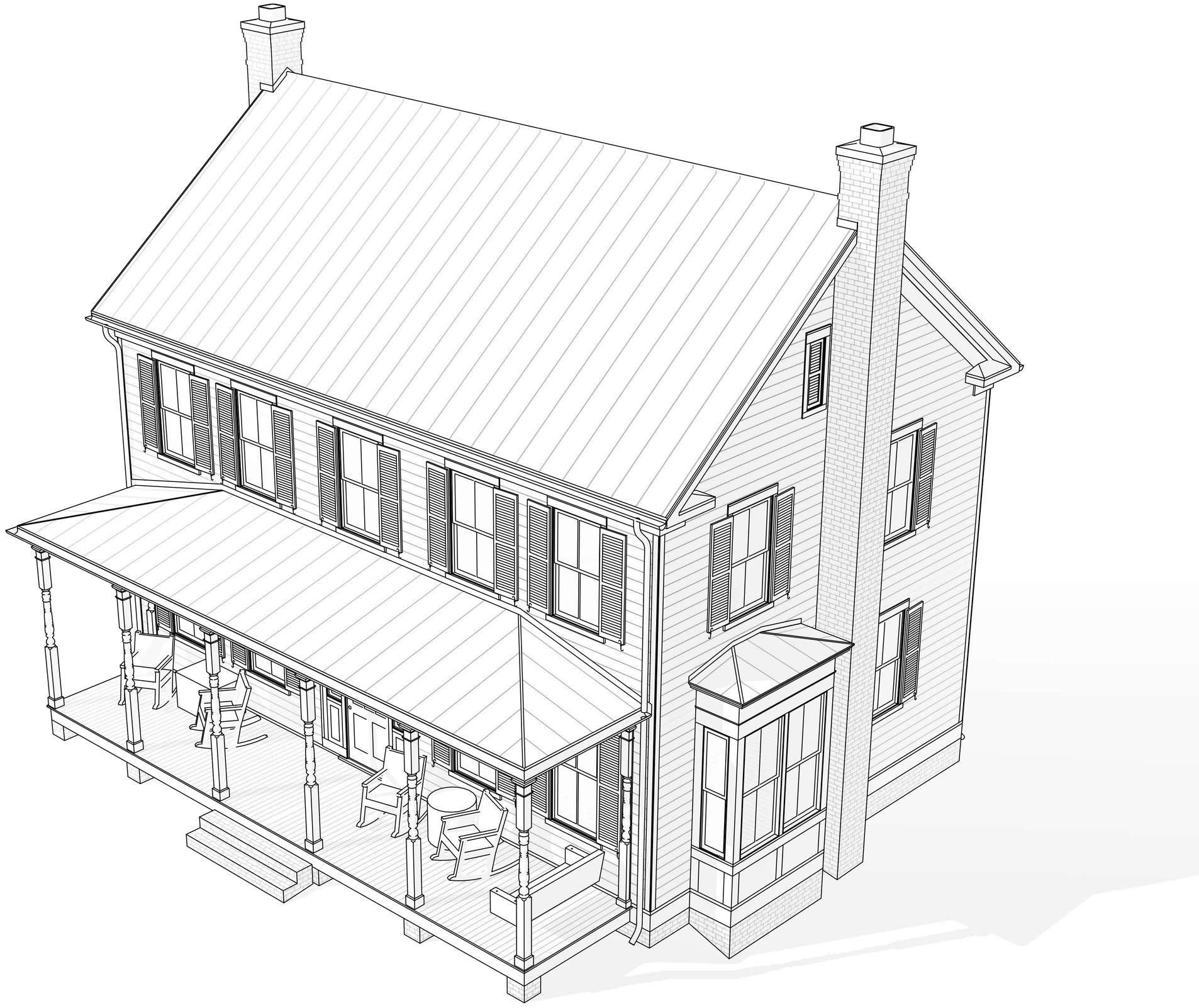


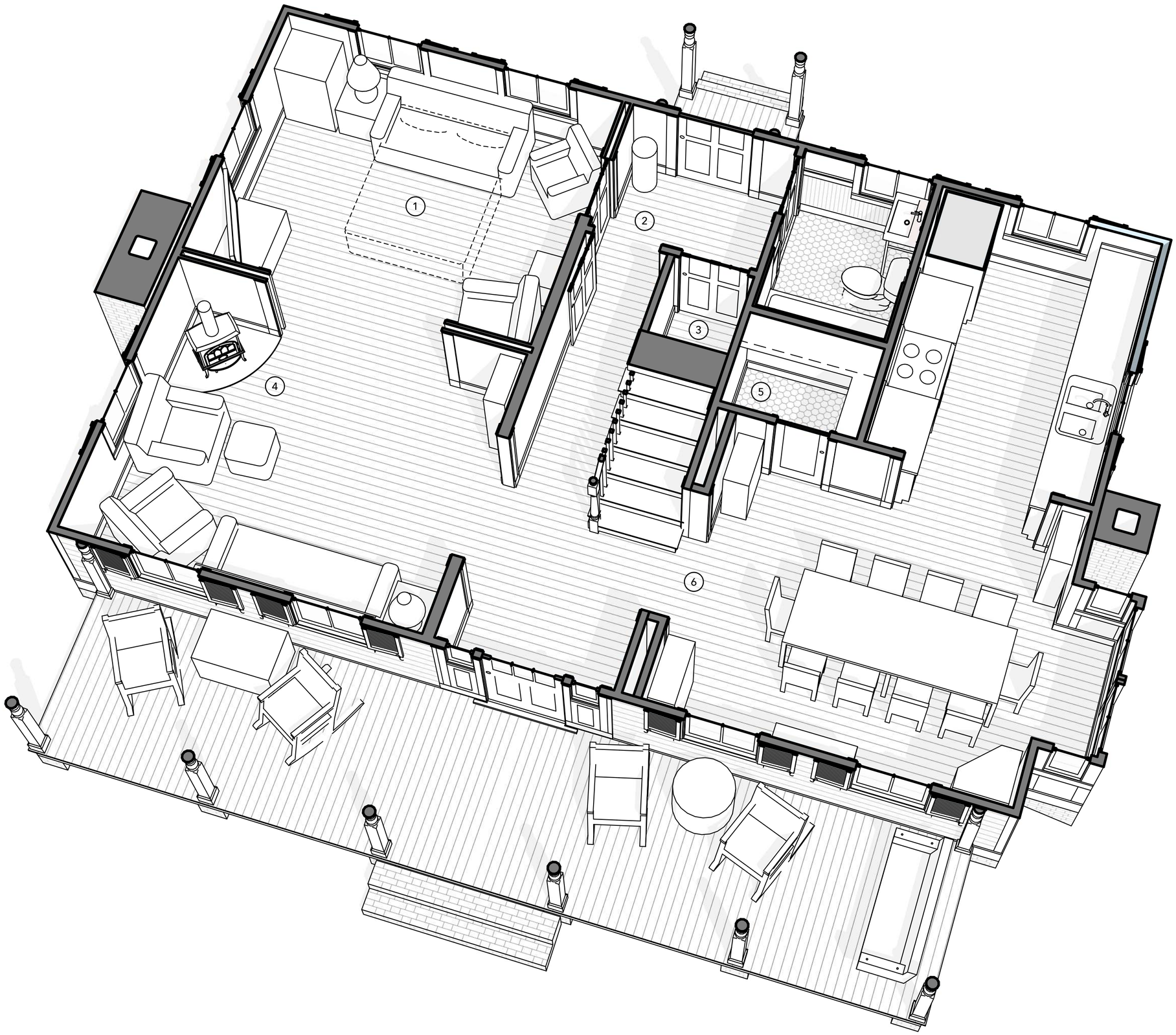
EASTERN FARMHOUSE

DESIGN OVERVIEW

JAY OSBORNE

The Eastern Farmhouse is based on my earlier Southern and Western Farmhouse designs. Though it is possible for you to download the open-source files and change them yourself, this kind of variation saves you time, shows you possibilities, and tests the adaptability of this work. It also shows how endearing old houses have similar architectural layouts, yet allow infinite personalizations.

Basically, the Eastern Farmhouse is organized around a central hall, with 2 rooms on each side, on each of the two main levels. It has a simple front porch and a small rear portico. The central hall lets you choose which side is actually the front. This version is more economical than the designs it is derived from. Though the floor area is smaller, and the details are simpler, it still is grand and graceful.



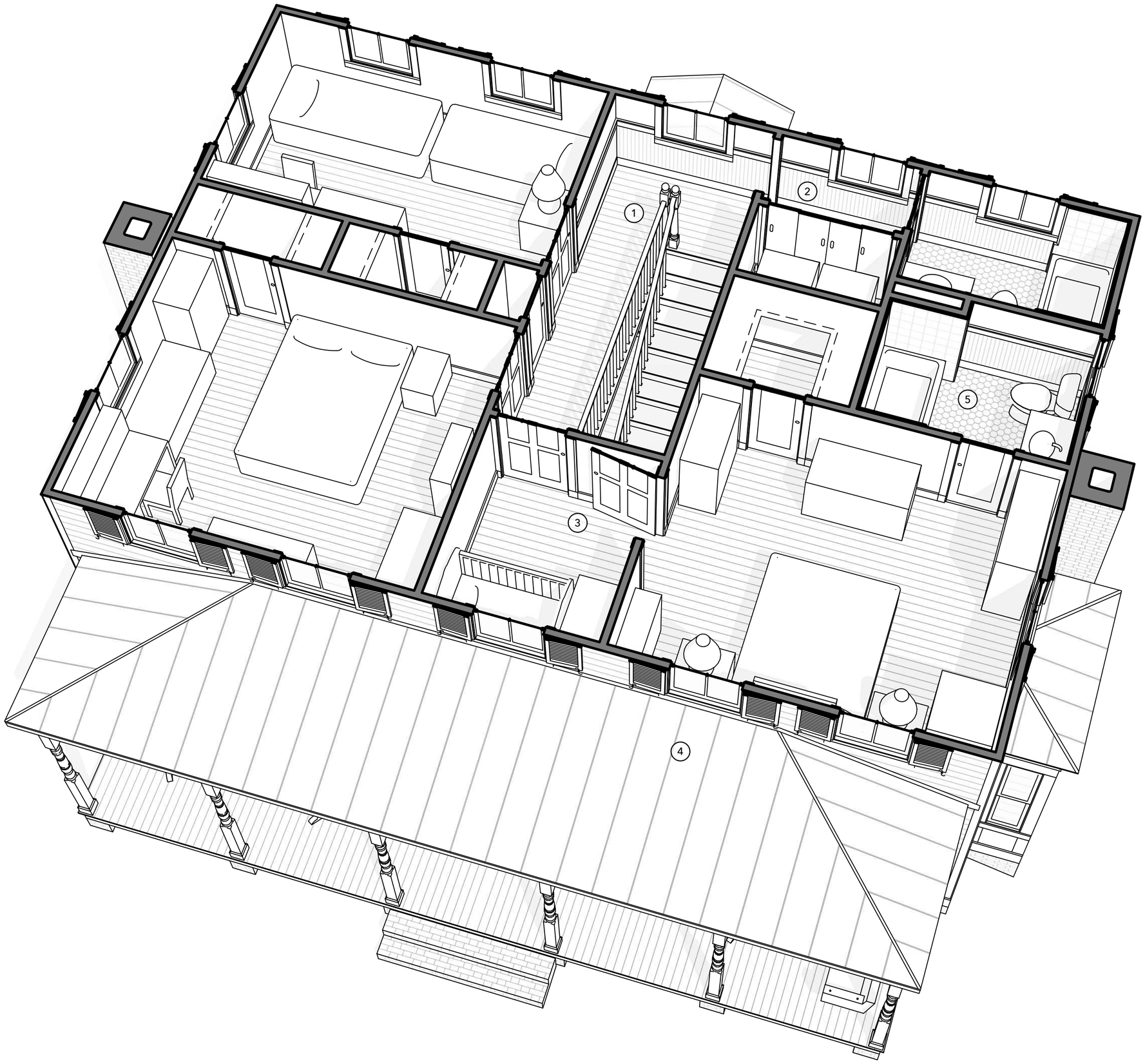
(1) As a major feature of the first level, a portion of the living area can transform into a private bedroom (or office, or playroom) because of the pocket doors. **(2)** Part of the central hall can be partitioned off, connecting the bedroom with the bathroom, as a suite. The doors could be open most of the a time, but closed for a temporary guest room. **(3)** This closet could instead be basement access.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

FIRST FLOOR

JAY OSBORNE

(4) A woodstove goes in this corner. If the adaptable configuration isn't desired, the woodstove can be centered in the room, removing the wall of pocket doors. **(5)** A utility room is conveniently located towards the center of the house. It could also be a pantry. The thick wall is for ducts to traverse the below the joists. **(6)** The openings are aligned for a spacious feel. It also helps lighting and breezes.



(1) The central hall is about as narrow as it can be for this kind of railing, and for the closet (or basement staircase) enclosed under the stairs. **(2)** A cased opening and small passage connect to a laundry closet. (**3)** A small sitting area at the main bedroom suite can have a crib, desk, sofa, etc. The door may remain open but allows many more uses. It's best to plan for it. Leave wall space for light switches.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

SECOND FLOOR

JAY OSBORNE

(4) Because the roof slopes down from the windows, it isn't visible unless you stand right next to it. It can reflect light, however. That may be desirable in the winter, but to moderate it, it may be best to have a midtone color for the roofing. **(5)** The bathrooms are grouped together, concentrating utility functions in this corner of the house. It's good to have thicker walls and soffits for pipes or ducts.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

FRONT PERSPECTIVE

JAY OSBORNE

The Eastern Farmhouse is a classic design most common in houses built in the 1800s in the Mid-Atlantic states. However, similar houses were built far and wide. This 5-bay facade with a front porch is still a favorite in the region. Yet design is more than just the facade. The floor layout is also inspired by historical houses. **(1)** The porch posts are tall enough for brackets, spandrels, and other ornament. **(2)** Eave returns create the appearance of a simple, vernacular cornice. These types of details have an enormous influence on the appearance of an old house. **(3)** The bay window is great for outward views. **(4)** This may be called a "false chimney," but it still is functional (and easy to build). It is used by the plumbing vents (which are normally pipes that poke through a roof randomly, like pimples).

(1) The loadbearing brick chimney is extremely common in old construction, and still quite economical to build. For visual balance, it spreads at the bottom, close to the woodstove. The other chimney is primarily intended for plumbing vents, but can serve another woodstove. For a basement, it could also be a radon vent. **(2)** Attic vents are built like wooden shutters, but also with insect screens inside.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

WEST PERSPECTIVE

JAY OSBORNE

(3) The windows get smaller in the upper floor. This “graduate fenestration” (a highly pretentious term) helps to visually balance a facade. For the same reason, ceilings typically get lower as you go up each level. **(4)** The porch is not high off the ground, so a railing is unnecessary. **(5)** Just in case a railing is desired, the porch steps are wide. Even without rails, turned posts provide a good handhold.

(1) Because of the central hall, the back of the house could instead be the front. A small portico is provided here, with an arched ceiling. Such a facade was very common in northern states, especially in New England. Choosing your front lets you orient the porches towards the sun and the views. **(2)** Changing materials can change the look to match the area. Imagine shingle siding and slate roofing.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

REAR PERSPECTIVE

JAY OSBORNE

(3) If this were the back of the house, it would be remarkably easy to create a rear addition. Such an addition could have a designated bedroom suite, a mudroom, or a garage. It may sound counterintuitive, but architecturally, a box is liberating. It allows for easy additions and incremental growth over time. In contrast, the artificial complexity of McMansions makes them difficult to add to.

(1) The bay window needs to sit on a foundation. It shouldn't just cantilever here. Visual structure is important both psychologically and aesthetically. **(2)** This simple chimney is only necessary for a plumbing vent, but even with a chimney flue, it's all you really need. It's not ideal for it to be so close to the bay window, but this has a beautiful side effect: warm-toned light is reflected into the window.

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

EAST PERSPECTIVE

JAY OSBORNE

(3) For a house like this, two chimneys look better than one. They also should be placed close to the roof ridge– otherwise they will look stretched and spindly. Here they are centered on the ridge. They can still look fine if pushed off-center by one or two feet. **(4)** Instead of a small portico, the back could have an 8'x8' mudroom. It could also be simpler– just a trabeated door surround, for instance.

(1) The attic has no dormers, cross gables, or space for bedroom-sized windows. So it likely wouldn't be good for that. However, it could be framed for storage. This may be best to use inexpensive trusses and conventional insulation details. **(2)** The upstairs ceiling is only 8 feet tall. Nine feet (as in the lower level) is more versatile, but a shorter ceiling upstairs is fine here (and was common in the past).

EASTERN FARMHOUSE

SECTION PERSPECTIVE

JAY OSBORNE

(3) The downstairs ceiling is high enough for transoms, which dramatically improves the daylighting and can improve the cross breezes. **(4)** The back of the hall is separated so a bedroom suite could be here. **(5)** A simple crawlspace is shown, but this house could have a basement. The stairs would be stacked here. A basement door, however, could make the bedroom suite a bit more awkward.